

Chapter VI

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Mechanics of Writing

The 1970's America saw the beginning of the influential writing career of the Alabama writer, Gail Godwin. Her voluminous works centered on the lives of women, without being overtly feministic, continues to be the benchmark in the growth of the literature on learned, intellectual women. Godwin has authored 14 novels, two collection of short stories, two works of non-fiction and two books of edited, narrative journals. Among Godwin's honors are : a Guggenheim Fellowship, 1975-1976; Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, 1981; National Book Award finalist honors for her novels *The Odd Woman*, *The Mother and Two Daughters* and *Violet Clay*.

Godwin is a keen observer of people and events and transforms those observations to her writings instructing herself, "When I find my melody, it is intimate. Otherwise I'm not interested." (VC 348). This has made her writings to be categorized under life writings. Documentation of the experiences of one's own or another's in the form of autobiography, the diary entries, letters and personal essays all constitute Life Writing. It has in it the testimonies of people whose lives bear the patterns of noble experience. Godwin's biography has a lot of elements that has found its way into her writings.

Godwin grew up in a three women household that comprised of her grandmother, her mother and herself and the book *The Odd Woman* has a similar setting where Jane, her grandmother Edith and her mother Kitty are the principal characters around whom the story revolves. The half-sister and half-brothers all supplement the theme of the novel which is identification of self and its connection to the others around. Reviewing the book, which was a National Book Award finalist, the Chicago Sun-Times stated that it

was “one of the most realistic, intelligent and skillful character studies of a contemporary woman to date.” In her conversation with Rob Neufeld, the book reviewer for the Asheville Citizen-Times, Godwin said *The Odd Woman* was going to be “the grandmother’s story, then progress to the mother’s story, and then to Jane’s story.”(OW 427). She in fact had sent some questions to her grandmother to answer but before which her grandmother died and incidentally she began the book with “Jane going to a funeral.”(OW 427). To turn the autographical materials to fiction she “starts of from somewhere”(OW 430) and at certain point works on “some kind of alchemy”(OW 430) and it is then the material for the fiction begins, which she calls “the real truth”, “the story truth rather than what literally happened.”(OW 430).

Godwin was at the Plonk School of Creative Art at Asheville which was run by two sisters Laura and Lillian Plonk, and the sisters tried getting the accent out of some of the students so that they “wouldn’t speak like hillbillies.”(OW 430). The author could not stand those remarks and had reported it to her mother. In the fiction she had made Jane faint at such a place and eventually achieves what she had wanted, which was quitting school. Having learnt from Jung’s autobiography that he went through a period of fainting to escape situations that he did not like, she had made use of the habit of fainting for the scene in the novel where the grandmother Edith meets her husband at the fourth of July celebration, where she faints in his hands not able to accept the crudeness of the realities around her in the world and after regaining consciousness says “Life is a disease.” (OW 23). While at Yaddo where Godwin was going to a Fourth of July Celebration herself, notwithstanding the noisy firecrackers and the crowd she had asked the composer, Robert Starer to take her home and it was he who then turned out to be her companion for a very long time to

come. Thus, fact, reality and fiction were all fused with craftsmanship to render her works the quality of unsurpassable honesty. Jane also meets the ‘villain’ of her family story, Von Vorst, the experience which transformed her assumptions on life to make her realize that people play various roles in life of which some are forced on the individual and some others are willingly played.

Emily, Jane’s half-sister in the story is also created after Godwin’s half-sister . Her sister had been going to St. Genevieve’s and this brought in the recollection of “that whole pain of dressing for school.”(OW 431), and in the novel Jane, lying in the bed, watches her sister out of a half-closed eye, who is trying various outfits to school. In truth, it was Godwin who “had that moment before the mirror”(OW 431), and the whole picture was so moving that she calls it “I was that girl and she was me.”(OW 431).

The place and the setting is very important to her as she was assured that place comes before any character and “character is so much formed by setting.”(OW 432). In this regard she was influenced by Nathaniel Hawthorne who invested his settings with a history. It was Nina Baym of Urbana who introduced the writings of Hawthorne to Godwin in her classes which she attended. It has its parallel in the classes of Sonia Marks that Jane attends in her college and Godwin said “Sonia is Nina.”(OW 432). This brings realism to the whole episode of Sonia’s lectures on Hawthorne and Jane’s discussion with her on the topic.

Godwin was raised by her mother and grandmother and while her grandmother filled the traditional role of a mother looking to the household chores of cleaning, washing and cooking, her mother who was the breadwinner in the family taught college-level English in the mornings, and worked as a reporter for a local paper, Asheville Citizen – Times, in the evenings. In the weekends she wrote love stories for magazines in New York. Even at

an very early age, Godwin was able to identify her with her mother's occupation as a writer. Kitty, Jane's mother in the novel is incidentally a writer of 'pulp stories' and Jane, who was four or five at the time discusses the stories with her mother. She asked Kitty "why don't you write a story about a woman who teaches school or the college and writes love stories on the weekend and has a little girl like me?"(OW 27).

Godwin and her father re-connected at her high school graduation and she moved in with her father during her junior year in college. Her father committed suicide later that year. Godwin's uncle and a half-brother committed suicide as well. In *Violet Clay*, her father becomes the heroine's uncle Ambrose. In real life Godwin does not seem to have probed into her father taking his own life. But in the novel she tries studying it by implanting in Violet the capacity to stand away from herself and think about life from someone else's position. This is called 'character empathy' and Godwin relates it to Ortega Gasset's concept of transmigration into others' souls. In Gasset's opinion, this ability to transmigrate into another soul "is the highest form of civilized sport."(QW 61). Violet goes to the extremities of experimenting with this by staying in her uncle's cabin where he had shot and killed himself. When she writes a letter to her friend Milo in which her last line is " There is lots to paint here, especially if you're Frederick Church or Thomas Cole...."(VC 267), she feels a shiver of déjà vu running through her which reminded her of the last letter her uncle mailed to her from Plommet Falls which carried similar idea " Lots of beautiful scenery to paint, or to write about, for that matter, if you're Thoreau. ", and thinks "He must have written it sitting at this very table."(VC 267).

The concept of an individual playing various parts in life appealed to Godwin, and this she applied to her novels. She made the unfathomable complex qualities in her as

characters in her novels and she attempted to analyze it through her writing by having an intimate conversation with it and she states in her interview with Welch, “I’m a novelist interested in the inner life.” (79). This method gave her the freedom to see her own qualities as different from herself. Such qualities are collective by nature and the characters formed out of them become archetypes. Her novels thus become a medium for collective history. Her creations like Jane, Clare, Julia, Edith, Kitty, Theodora, Theo, Christina, Wickie Lee, Violet, Nell, Gerda and Emily are representatives of the conflicts in her life.

Recalling Godwin’s household in which she grew up will provide details to this life-inspired approach. Jane and Clare symbolize the educated women of 1900’s South. Like the author they were caught between the culture of Old South and the changing culture of the New South. They could not move from their foundations to the new world, as their faithfulness to their land and the ‘guilt’ in leaving it held them back. The stories thus abound with such predicaments of theirs and they are conscious of the societal correctness. Edith and Theodora are the archetypes of the southern conventionality. Gerda is the new woman, who does not share the guilt of the past and so could adopt the changing culture relatively easy. To Christina and Violet, the goal is higher consciousness through communion with the departed soul which leads to the spiritual development and this equation of religious and aesthetic thinking is a distinctive achievement of Godwin’s life work. People experiencing existential anguish is her major theme for some stories and the two suicides in her family, that of her father and of her brother Tommy formed the basis of her novels *Violet Clay* and *The Southern Family* respectively. She does not limit the narration to her approaches and her reactions to the incidents in her life. As a dutiful writer, she has qualified her letters to be read by a wider audience by including the response of many others around

her by making them appear in her novels and allows them the opportunity to be explicit about their outlooks and brings in imaginary characters when necessary for switch in perspectives aiming at impartial presentation of the facts. When the target audience cannot be restricted as is the case of any literature like that of Godwin's that deals with universal issues and emotions, and that the skill of the writer lies in making the work interesting to the readers, the writing process requires the sanction of certain liberties .

The writer speaking to The New York Times, October 11, 1987, on her style of writings makes clear that "It's hard for people to accept the fact that characters are composites... But I am a fiction writer. If anyone set me the task of straight autobiography, I don't think I could get through the first paragraph without changing something." Gail

Godwin's intention is to explore the intricacies of personality and its existence which she perfects with the employment of her personal experiences. In this type of autobiographical fiction Godwin relents to the demands of her protagonists to bring in modification in the real incidents to suit the themes she has chosen. In view of the dramatic interest which is essential for any writing, she strategizes the characters and incidents in her works accordingly to bring in the required effect without casting off her honest representation.

According to Godwin, much of her time was spent in the newsroom, where her mother worked. The newsroom at the television station and the short trip inside the station in *A Mother and Two Daughters* is the outcome of her experience. Godwin had seen her mother's writings being rejected and her career as a writer is often seen as a fulfillment of what her mother could not achieve as a writer.

Godwin's concentration on the moral and psychological growth of a character made academic Lihong Xie to identify her with the literary tradition of the Bildungsroman.

To him, the protagonists of Godwin are southern women who “caught between the ideal of southern womanhood and contemporary feminism, struggle to form a personal identity...” (545-549). In the early books of Godwin the female characters are fearful and passive and are subject to the male domination of some kind or the other and have difficulty to move out of that. They are identified with their male companions and undergo a series of events and emotional trauma before they arrive at a rational solution to further life. It is the people around or the practices that prevail in the social circle that renders assistance to these women to overcome the barriers. Jane could see that her mother who was married to Ray Sparks is different from her mother who was widowed when she was a little girl. She felt that even the tears of her mother then had the ‘bright little spark’ of winning quality in it. But in her days with Ray, Jane found that her frequent losing of temper, shrieks and weeping all had gone out of her and she had turned unemotional and reflecting over it, Jane attributes it to her inclination towards religion and god. Godwin’s woman is different in the sense that she does not run away from men or things that holds her back. Instead she goes “in search of herself, confronts obstacles caused by her family, her lovers, her husband, or her own imagination as she struggles to establish her independence and secure her identity through her work.”(welch 39). These women with all their personal flaws still manage to outgrow all these complexities through their reflection over their lives’ activities, and deriving strength from the community achieve personal growth.

Jane ended her clandestine meetings with her married lover Gabriel which was a relationship out of convenience rather than love and continued with her teaching profession. Her friend Gerda had helped Jane understand what she had been working for was “avoidances and evasions and illusions and your cringing little refusals to see the truth, to see things

as they are!”(OW 401), goes on to be the editor of the women’s magazine *Femina Sole*. Critic Anne Cheney states that her heroines are always “searching for happiness, academic or artistic achievement, love, respect, or, more generally, meaning in life.” (134-145).

The narration of the events is limited to Jane’s point of view which Godwin stresses through the recurrent image of Jane’s alarm clock “*Tempus Fugit*”(OW 12) that the chances which nature allowed in her heroine’s life was also rapidly moving farther and she has to arrive at some compromise or decision that would decide her life. Jane’s narration intensifies the effect of comparison and contrast with the other characters, especially women like her grandmother, mother, half-sister and friends with whom her life is intertwined. She had some women around her on whom she could reflect over: her grandmother who entered into a dramatic wedding in the 1905 episode; her mother who having enjoyed a passionate married life has now turned all her attention to spirituality; her half-sister who chose her life partner quite decisively at an early age; her feminist friend Gerda, rejecting men, had involved herself in working for a feministic magazine and her professor and friend Sonia Marks was successfully balancing family and career. The sole narration paired with the unknown fear of impending loneliness and the resolve of not getting trapped by any form of bondage that will deprive her of her independence allows her musings an unaffected tone and a truthful depiction of inner life . This also allowed her a close examination of the quiet independent life that was hers. As a writer as well she could put across her thoughts and experience as a story and saw how it was perceived by others who contributed their personal elements to it.

In *Evenings At Five* Christina reached a personal level of relationship with God, which was the aspiration of every living soul that believed in divinity. After Rudy’s death

when thoughts about him hit her strong, she cried in her anguish “Rudy, you could probably materialize in that chair if you wanted to. So could you, God.”(EF 39).

Godwin’s novel *A Southern Family* is related to her life. While Godwin was visiting her mother in North Carolina, she received the shocking news of her half-brother Tommy’s suicide. He had shot his girlfriend and then himself and their bodies were found in an automobile. This was in the year 1983 and Godwin was with her family during that testing period. The tragic death of Tommy was in her mind for long and she took this incident for her novel *A Southern Family* which she wrote four years after the mishap. She used her “fictional truth” to the narration as her style is, and made it a more satisfying story to the readers. This addition is justified as the author’s aim is a faithful representation of the “material” and her “vision”. While speaking of her writings, Jerome Bruner says that she “creates possible worlds through the transformation of the ordinary and the conventionally ‘given’” (49). In the novel the writer goes about describing how the death of a member in the family transforms the sentiments of the others in it. To give a verbal form to the desperate emotions of her half-brother and the traumatic experience that he must have undergone, Godwin takes refuge in the convenient form of fiction which allows scope for its expression. ‘Memory is a carrier of the past’(137) remarks Gaikwad in *Novelists of the American South* and this recollection is the most interesting of any narration. Through her account of the events that precedes and succeeds, she articulates the unspoken mind of the character Theo where all those around him come to understand more of him after his death. Multiple narration technique is used effectively which is rewarding in explicitly presenting the character of Theo. This narrative is advantageous in “giving shape to phenomena such as social discourse, collective thinking, and forms of consciousness that are constituted by more than one thinking, talking, and feeling individual.”(260).

Violet Clay has the story of Godwin and her father and in the novel, the father figure is replaced by Violet's uncle Ambrose. Uncle Ambrose's suicide and Violet's artistic fervor are all features of the writer's life. Though her idea in starting this novel was to produce a gothic novel, it "was back to the father story again." (VC 344). Godwin's father had committed suicide and in her unpublished story which she wrote earlier, she had named the protagonist's father as Ambrose .Uncle Ambrose meeting her in her school and her short stay with him are all incidents from Godwin's life.

Culture plays an important role in defining the nature of the story. In everything Godwin willingly retains the pride of tradition, of family, and of place which are all products of the rich past. The culture of South that has been undergoing a change has also been brought as a character and all qualities of the people who populate the novel, more importantly that of Theo's is studied besides it. From Bruner's analysis of the genres of autobiography and novel in *Self-making and world-making*, where he recorded his observation that both work towards "not only the construction of the self, but also a construction of one's culture" (*Aesthetic Education* 77). It can be said that the novels of Godwin that has the author's personal experience also lead to the development of the self. Theo was the representative of the Old South who not bearing the downsides of his culture, attempted at changing what was possible. His marriage to the 'hillbilly' Snow was one such where he signified the relenting social outlook. He also successfully earned respect to LeRoy, an Afro-American construction worker by befriending and maintaining strong friendship with him. This is a breakthrough in the old social orders and a notable feat towards promising relationship between the Blacks and Whites. The change in the culture of the South is exemplified through his rebellious response to the restrictions laid down by the classification of race

and class. Godwin is also adept at presenting to the readers the variation from the old orders that needs to be valued and at the same time ensuring the existence of the rich South in keeping alive the memory of the deceased Theo through all other characters. There is a resonance of the subtle antipathy that Theo had towards the kind of society he was in, in the words of his brother Rafe. While speaking his mind to Dr. Blake whom he consulted to get him through the mental disturbance he suffered following his brother's sudden death, Rafe told her "you'd have to be from around here to understand all our little stratification systems, all our hidden instruments of social torture." (SF 274). Both the boys had been tired of the "snob schools" that they attended ;this is in synchronization with his conversation with Felix where he makes the statement about his southern family that they all try to be something what they are not in reality. From Rafe's side of the narration that is brought under the chapter 'Nightmares', it could be seen that he has come to comprehend the changes that Theo's passing away had brought in his mother. Rafe who understood that his being the favorite to his mother had sometimes been a problem to Theo, but then after his demise he had that "really queasy sensation"(SF 278) that his mother had "switched favorites" and "Theo's the one she admires and loves most now."(SF 278). These revelations would have escaped if not for the novelist unifying the multiple voices. Theo is named after a particular character Theopelus "after whom her mother had created some stories to tell her. The character of Theopelus was what Godwin and her mother "would have liked to be like" (Donlon 12). Actions expressing rage over the happenings around but at the same time being lovable was the characteristic that the author bestowed over her creation and the Theo of the novel has parallels with the fictitious character of her childhood. He is frequently compared to Christ as he is seen as a guardian by many in the family

after his death. Rafe recollects an instance where he was drunk and in a bad shape was calling out for help and his brother had promised to “get (Rafe) home”; Clare remarks to her friend “Theo was always trying to save people”; and even Lilly’s new found attachment to her elder son is parallel to her growing faith in God.

For the varied narrative technique the author has used the omniscient narrator to various other individuals who are his family and some who have had close association with the family of Quicks as narrators. The narrators are Clare Campion, Theo’s half-sister ; Theo’s bereaved parents Lily and Ralph Quick ; Theo’s younger brother Rafe ; Snow Mullins, Theo’s former wife-a mountain girl; Julia Lowndes, a friend of the Quick family ; and Felix, Clare’s lover who is a German born Jew. Felix’s account is significant here for the reason that he is the only person who being an outsider had the choice to observe objectively the family of Quicks. Altogether these many interpretations from the insight of each give the story a finishing quality as every narration fills in the gaps and loose endings in the narration by others and it makes sense to the readers. This could also be termed ‘story repair’ as the writer brings in modification to the real story. The succession of reports from the personal view of all of these characters strengthens the fictional reality thereby affirming Godwin’s point in the novel that each has to live with his or her guilt. As Bruner says about the novelist in *What is a narrative fact?* that “It is his or her function not simply to cherish the facts that do not yet make sense in anybody’s story but also to generate candidate narratives that both handle those aberrant facts and generate new ones”(6). This skill has also helped in giving her characters like Theo, the life he would have wished to live as a person who is understood and valued for his sentiments.

In a lively first-person narrative by Theo's former wife, Snow, the family of Quick's is seen from the perspective of the mountain bred girl. The individual narratives does not stand apart from one another and the story proceeds simultaneously as the reader goes back and forth in time and in and out of different characters' minds keeping pace with the life and time of the novel.

In *The Odd Woman*, the scheme of the novel entirely is dependent solely on the narration of Jane. Since the events of the story is to be analyzed based on Jane's point of view only, Godwin uses the other effective tools like her memories, her reflections, her fantasies and her unsympathetic narration of her own story with the watchful eyes of a critic. Regardless of her intellectuality Jane could see that women like Sonia, needed certain dramas in life that has some idealistic tales which they "still love most," like "How some woman went to work and got her man." (OW 59). As the title of the novel shows, it is the narration of the 'odd woman' Jane, and 'odd' here because she is alone without any man for companionship. Since the story is about the life of Jane and is also narrated by her, it is effective in bringing about her increasing awareness about the passage of time and its consequences in her life that she should be prepared for. The psychological preparation required by her for this is achieved through various means like her comparison of herself against all the women she is related to, and even against a matronly customer at 'Saks' where she goes for shopping. At the shop, where she is on her 'redemptive' act of 'refurbishing her image'(OW 310), the memories of past times with her grandmother Edith who understood her, her remorse at her incompetence with the 'approved face of the American woman'(OW 312) sickened her and she purchased a dress that she was not convinced with as she was preoccupied with the thoughts of her choices in life narrowing

down as time passed by where “certain choices harden into the irrevocable” (OW 317). The writer has also had a similar shopping experience like where Jane in the novel ends up buying a dress that she actually did not wish for. But the modification was in leaving the dress in the taxi by Jane, whereas it was a book by Jung that Godwin actually left in the taxi.

The first person narrative is a powerful instrument in a story of this nature because it is the subject who could well describe the inner fear, longings and the affirmations of the self. Any objective view from some other character in the novel would have disrupted the seriousness of the subject which is the arrival at complacency of mind to live through loneliness. The narrator here is able to look at her problem from all angles through the author’s introduction of several personalities who represented the various facets of her own psyche. Around Jane were the feminist friend Gerda, the editor of a feminist magazine who was with resilient ideas against men, and the “new woman” Sonia Marks, a well-educated college professor, who could converse with her at a level equal to her and one who though radical, at the roots was conservative with respect for the old Southern order. There was also Ann Weeks, the wife of her lover Gabriel, who had the complete devotion of her husband which Jane doubted was denied her, which however was the truth ultimately, and her mother Kitty who had her husband beside her when situation demanded. There was the dramatic love stories that involved her grandmother Edith who ‘managed to faint away’ dramatically in the hands of a man who then became her husband and the elopement of her great aunt Clevea with the ‘villain, of a drama. All these people influenced Jane’s thought process and thus her narrative. Through them Jane was able to see what she was actually to herself. When she thought of her place in the lives of the people around her she realized that ‘Even if Sonia and Gabriel and Gerda and Kitty, and perhaps other

friends as well, were all remembering her at precisely this moment, she could only be a memory to them, an image summoned by their own imaginations' (OW 68). This urged her to establish her own identity as it was her life and that life she had to live.

The character of Francesca's mother Kate in *Glass People* has been created after Godwin's mother Kathleen whose second marriage to Frank Cole left her daughter disconsolate. The events are presented to the readers by Francesca and much of the narration is from her contemplation over the happenings at home. Godwin's precise narration through Francesca is symbolic of the acute hopelessness of the 'new' women who were fighting for self-expression in contemporary America of 20th century which discriminated women on the basis of gender and provides the historical background to the women centered writings of Godwin in 1970s.

Francesca's anguish in being the 'object de art' to her husband and her attempts at alternates to discover her identity and her meeting with her mother who had compromised her whole personality to live through the new found life mark a notable beginning predicting the onslaught of women who would rewrite the traditional myths of femininity like motherhood that was being utilized by the society to ban the freedom of thought of women.

In *Violet Clay* again the events in the book travel around the views of the novel's name sake Violet Clay and she does the role of a narrator also. The nature of the story demands shackling the sufferings and fears of the past to achieve individual acclaim. Different from the other women of Godwin like Jane, Clare, Julia and Francesca who were less confident in evolving themselves, Violet was strong and determined in pursuing her desire. For her depiction of a "new woman" in Violet, Godwin is viewed as a "woman's novelist," who through her characterization has opened up possibilities for the women

who were caught between the old and new culture to emerge victorious. Since *Violet Clay* is told completely from Violet's point of view, Godwin had brought in various other characters who were closely associated to Violet's uncle Ambrose to fill in Violet with more reliable information about her uncle which she was not aware of otherwise. This way the author has made the first person narrative effective by aiding Violet to "incorporate their stories and add them to her own experience of her uncle" (VC 349) making the narration meaningful.

There is an array of multiple voices and views that traverses the novel *A Southern Family*. The variegation of voice includes various socio-linguistic register like from the 'red neck' Ralph, bourgeoisie Lilly, 'hillbilly' Snow, the writer Clare, Felix the Jew and the rebel Rafe. All their narrative articulates the layers of meaning that makes the novel a life-writing. The author's voice along with these many voices reinforces the energy required to make it a 'cultural story-repair' thereby attaining the purpose of enrichment of the work

Clare, tormented by the feeling of 'guilt,' which is typically Southern, of not being there for her brother when he needed her, set to write an extensive letter to him after his death. Here Godwin employs the epistolary form of narrative laden with all personal specifics which is thoroughly convincing and reassuring, serving the very purpose of its usage and Godwin has devoted a whole chapter to this letter which is like an attempt at confessing to her half-brother that which he had always been doubting; as a writer to cast off the "Campion tone" and the class of stories where "everything gets wrapped up." (SF 382), for the sake of nicety. It is also a means through which she could give all the attention he required from her.

In *Evenings at Five*, suiting the narrative, Godwin has introduced an omniscient narrator and the individual character is eased of the task of doing all description and gives the story an objective viewpoint that does not influence the character study. The form of the 'tale' also allows "inventing" that flavors the story with 'surprises of memory and feeling that shed new light on the literal happenings.' (xvii). For the *Christina Stories* that follow *Evenings at Five*, she has used first person narrator where the narrator Christina and in reality Godwin is the center of her own narrative. In this 'stories or memoirs' the first-person narrator shares Christina's personal history. The narrator of the story *Old Lovegood Girls* is known only as "I", and the memoir pieces *Mother and Daughter Ghosts*, *Waltzing With the Black Crayon* are part of Christina's or Gail's ongoing history. Each had an important happening that described the major turning points in her life like Christina finding and then losing her father, Christina went on a last journey with her mother, and Christina meeting her mentor who succeeded in making her decisive about her writing career.

A Mother and Two Daughters which was populated by dreams has the mother Nell, and the two daughters Cate and Lydia as the narrators of the story. This story is three dimensional thus and it is justifiable to have them relate their part in the ongoing story as, the narration is about how these three women fill in the void that was created by the death of Strickland, the head of the family. Both the daughters were different in temperament and so was their view point. Like Godwin's, it was a 'women only' family now and as it was the man who shared a non-negligible part in the lives of these three women. Like the three women, Godwin, her mother and her grandmother, here Nell, Clare and Lydia suffered a common loss. They were dependent on each other during the crisis period and the narration too is interspersed one with the other. While Nell's

observation of others in the locality provides an overall picture of the community at home, her powerful insight at their actions acted as a prologue to what could be expected of them. “Her meticulously controlled fiction,” wrote Paul Gray in his essay “creates the illusion of life unpredictably unfolding and of characters trying to make moral sense out of experiences that overwhelm thought.” (Vol.125), The author opens the book with Nell at the party narrating the scene which is topically a commendable choice to introduce the readers to the whole cast of characters who were to influence the narration. Theodora ‘the undisputed leader of their social set’, Grace Hill, the ‘hypochondriac’, Harley “brothers”, the ‘diminutive’ Wickie Lee, Latrobe and ‘plucky’ Lucy all parade before the readers in their glory. There is also a hint at what Nell’s ‘own elegant’ father called the “ungainly aspects” in his daughter that she kept suppressed now after her marriage to Strickland having blend into the landscape. Her elder daughter Cate is also given a brief description as one who does not take efforts to be agreeable with others around and whose ‘life had been just ...wasteful momentum.’ (MTD 332).And her other daughter Lydia is shown as a person with ‘tact and loyalty and basic good judgment.’ (MTD 310).

The narration of the happenings by the daughters that follow presents each of the sisters in a light that is not disturbed by the motherly lapses. Ultimately, the three women would have presented the personality of each other as the story moves. One comes to understand the dominant themes through the multiple views of predicaments. Freedman and Combs say that “truth can be found in descriptions of events that never occurred.” (99).

Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin spoke about his general observation of the novelists in *Discourse in the Novel*. He says:

The prose writer as a novelist does not strip away the intentions of others from the heteroglot language of his works, he does not violate those socio-ideological cultural horizons (big and little worlds) that open up behind heteroglot languages- rather, and he welcomes them into his work. The prose writer makes use of words that are already populated with the social intentions of others and compels them to serve his own new intentions. (*Discourse in the Novels* 299-300)

The conversation between Jane and her student Howard on this topic is very enlightening. In the course of their conversation, Jane remarked “ literature is the collection of the best expressions of these universal emotions and thoughts.”(OW 17). She continued with her explanation that the ‘best’ here meant the ones that had a special, extra power to hold the readers. Those were the expressions that have endured because of “a richness of language, an amazing distillation of many, many connected things, arranged in such a way that we see connections in such a way that we hadn’t seen before.”(OW 17).

By combining the time, place and incidents Godwin is able to present a tale that is understandable in any context. Like Eudora Welty, she uses a setting in a novel as a “gathering place” (AS 62) for all the major characters connected to it, and then gradually moves about working on gathering all the threads that provide a completion to the subject of the novel.

This is Godwin’s style of “story repair” where essential materials permissible within the boundaries of honesty are utilized in presenting the truth. As an artist her job does not end with reciting a tale, but has to infuse meaning into it to make it stand through any culture and society. The writer acting like a historian makes his readers relive the past and “shapes meaningless raw data into a form and pattern which have human meaning, rich in emotional and philosophical values.”(5). Theo, Clare, Julia, Kitty are all mere

symbols to whom Godwin assigns the responsibility of “meaning –making” to the world and thus a narrative becomes a ‘narrative therapy.’ This makes the emotional truths of the narrative more acceptable. The feelings that had been so far abstract is given a concrete form by the author through these representations. Theo is the shadow side of the author as she had said and Clare the writer in the family identifies a part of herself in her half-brother’s rebellious nature which is against the stereotypes of the society where she is also one. Ralph also realized how much of his son he had missed observing while he was alive and at the undertakers he felt ‘he was looking on Theo as a man for the first time.’ (SF 155).

A Mother and Two Daughters is Godwin’s first novel in which she focuses on the lives of multiple women characters. Though Cate is the central character in the novel, Godwin had devoted pages generously to the other women Nell and Lydia. This aids in an overall understanding of the personality of Cate. Like Felix in *The Odd Woman* who was a stranger to the family of Quicks and thereby was able to view them impartially, Nell was an outsider to the natives of Mountain City. On the other hand she was also the respectable wife of Leonard Strickland, the acclaimed lawyer of Mountain City, for forty years that made her an insider who had been an onlooker, if not a partaker in all the affectations of her society.

Like Theo’s death, Leonard’s death was an epiphany used by the writer that transformed the lives of the people who were in close association with him. His absence left a vacuum in their lives; more obviously in the lives of the women in his family. Contemporary Southern Writers note her novels as “unlike fairy tale romances, these novels present a realistic depiction of feminist concerns and struggles.”(46). His wife and his daughters come to understand themselves and the others around and the process of their self-actualization

begins after the unexpected tragedy in the family. Leonard had been a refuge for them, shielding them from the artificialities, crudeness around and at times camouflaging their own shortcomings. Nell, his wife, could allow herself to be spared the embarrassments in the social gatherings at Mountain City. After her husband's demise she had to play his role of a father to their daughters, a friend to his circle at Mountain City, and a well-wisher to his acquaintances.

The three women, the main characters in the fiction were personally close and attained their personal freedom through their deliberate efforts. This theme where the women search for ways to liberty is common in Godwin's works and growing up in a woman only family, she was familiar with the struggles of women in such a context and hence made such families the setting for her novels. The novels *A Mother and Two Daughters*, *The Odd Woman*, *The Southern Family*, *Violet Clay*, *Evenings at Five* and *Flora* are all about women who, in the absence of male figures, find their own resources to live their lives.

Godwin is savored for her amusing style in writing that lends her work an entertaining quality. Once returning from a party Rudy commenting on Gilbert Mallow who was sharing an anecdote that involved his mother says "She's pretty, no fool, either, despite the outstanding cabbages [cabbages was the topic of discussion]. Of course, she's southern. You Southerners consider it a point of honor to be able to discourse gracefully on everything from cockroaches to cabbages. Quite a legume-y-evening, wasn't it?"(EF 69). An understanding of the character of Rudy and in turn the effectiveness of choicest expression could be seen in how Rudy describes his times at the hospital's ICU as 'I made my maiden voyage to intensive care.'(EF 108).

Though the novelist deals with serious subjects in her writings like spirituality, self-identification, coming home and relativity to the society, she handles it skillfully with humor that is helpful to the readers of her novels to see the real side of the life without losing themselves in remorse, guilt or self-pity. Susan Shreve of *The Washington Post* observes that, Godwin's women "are strong, intelligent, funny, often self-mocking. They are tough on themselves [and] fall into predictable pits, but expect everything of themselves."

Humor depends on the context; her novels have the analysis of self in all possible ways and for the analysis to be genuine, it needs laughing at oneself and at one's shortcomings. Her novels are not meant to be tragedies though some of them have death or suicide as the propeller of self-analysis of people around. Godwin tells "I'm a novelist interested in the inner life." For example Jane accepts "her vulnerability, her insomnia, her terror at night time and also the kind of world she can make for herself." (Welch 80). When *The Odd Woman* is read deeply, the readers can sense the humor, though "It's not a ha-ha humor," (Welch 81). Jane's imaginary conversations with the 'enima bandid' whom she heard as attacking women who were alone, had the fear of loneliness but that which was given a lighter tone by the speaker as it was she anyways who should face him if he came to her and the possibility of him coming to her was very less. Edith, to boast of her grand-daughter attending the private school asked her grand-daughter to put her "legs down" before she opened the door to Mrs. Wurtburg to tell her that her "granddaughter sits up so late studying....They work too hard at that school" (OW 165). Such a scene is as amusing as it is thought provoking in that it is the author laughing at the simple exaggerations, affectations that the middle class people of South allow themselves.

Godwin is appreciated for her convincing characterization, and for her meticulous understanding of the psyche of the individuals who team her stories. Her intention is to create a thematic design that develops alongside the development of characters. The theme of after life and spirituality grows gradually with Christina's growing awareness of Rudy's presence after his death. In the introduction to the book she wrote "An encounter with a real absence can lead to a sounding through of certain values and energies of the absent person, qualities that transcend death."(OW xvii) .

Evenings at Five is the record of the authors longtime relationship with Robert Starer, a composer and was written after the death of Starer .It is a document about their times together and her account of her life without him. Their cozy cocktail rituals form the basis of this story which helps in rendering a moving quality to the book. In the introduction Godwin tells the readers why she wrote the book: "...in the early spring of 2002, as the first anniversary of Robert Starer's death approached, I was sitting on the sofa with my five o'clock drink and looking at his empty chair across from me. And I began jotting down a list of all the sounds I remembered from our former cocktail hour..." (OW xv). This recount of her personal life combined with the normative fictional quality gives this book a genuine value. This made Godwin a writer of fictional tale also and along with the memoir form she has brought in her artistic imagination which makes it a notable work. About writing *Evenings at Five* she said that she preferred the form of fiction to memoir because, though it had much of autobiographical elements in it still ' The major experience was real-all to real-but I needed to reserve the right to add and subtract and embellish, to "make it up" when my instinct tugged me in that direction.' (OW xvi), justifying the genre of fiction, she had named the two main characters Rudy and Christina which in real

life was Starer and Godwin herself. Unknowing to herself, the book had taken somewhat the shape of a 'ghost story'. He was visible to her mental eyes, if not to her physical eyes.

Now in the absence of a second person to develop a conversation, Godwin fills in this gap skillfully by collecting every possible sound and material around to take the tale forward. This provision of real life images that replicates and strengthens the real experience is the great asset to a story of this nature. Her awareness of his absence had made her more attentive to his voice that she does not skip even the slightest sounds in the vicinity. She calls this 'the cataloging of sounds' which in fact preceded her recollection of incidents that involved both of them. The story begins typically with such a record which goes as 'Five o'clock sharp.The Pope's phone call, followed by the grinding of the ice, a growling workmanlike sound, a lot like Rudy's own sound,'(EF 3). The sounds are important in this occasion as the vibrating personality of Rudy 'comes pulsing through the space he once inhabited.'(EF xvii). This merging of truth and imagination, which is the peculiar feature of this life-writing can be noticed in the author telling that "in the pregnant silence his partner listens to him more closely than ever."(EF xvii). Her fiction takes into account the ongoing friction between the human and the spiritual natures upon each other within the average middle-class experience. Godwin seems to testify that lived-with pain is also an inevitable feature of love for human beings and for God. Christina is left alone to rail against both him and god. She tells God "I don't know why I bother with either of you."(EF 39).

Simple line- drawings by Frances Halsband like Rudy's chair, view of below from Christina's study, confessional, and the villa, the orphanage, the factory, assigns the story the time and place, which is characteristic of Godwin's work. Unlike other novels, this

work is restricted to the recollection of memories within four walls which is well reinforced by these sketches. This gives the commonplace setting solidity and makes the readers experience intimate with the subject dealt with in the novel.

The reliving of lost life through fictionalizing their last days together and of her days without him that gives it a life after death shade transcends personal territory and touches on the universal topics of loss, despair and reconciliation. Such writings also serve as therapy, 'healing the minds of the victim who are bereaved by the loss.' (*Review by Maude McDaniel* April 2003).

For thirty years, Christina, the writer and Rudy, the musician were religiously observing the ritual of drinking and conversation at 5 p.m. which the writer calls as 'soul-to-soul cocktail hour'(EF 21). But the sudden death of Rudy of multiple myeloma broke their routine habit and the acceptance of the fact that her longtime companion is no more and her retention of him in her life through continuing with the daily ritual imagining his attendance gives this story a metaphysical vigor. With her reputation for being one among the very few who could combine religious theme with the record of real life has proved again in this novel that she is an expert at bringing these two sensitive subjects of reality and religion convincingly.

Nowhere does the author make her fiction maudlin; there are no overt emotions expressed anywhere and she has used a vocabulary that is elusive and delightful to read. When she mentions the appointment diary of Rudy, those entries that spoke of his' transfusions or his chemo' during his illness, it read 'Positive but not exuberant', Resigned but not depressed', Finished piano quintet'(EF 37). These expressions are subdued, at the same time remarkably dense in bringing forth the mental state of its writer.

Godwin attempts at repositioning her life in the real world she shared with Robert Starer and she resorts to spirituality as the means to achieve it. Godwin presents an inner secret from her own life as something different from herself for her fiction writing. Godwin has cited Rainer Maria Rilke's novel *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* as an example for this type of writing in her conversation with author John Hawkes in 1976 saying, "When he finished the book, it was completely imagined character, but the experiences in that book, he had taken from his own letters." (Bellamy 2007). This life-inspired approach is used by her in *Evenings at Five* and like any native writer she has combined it with the culture of religion, a religion that is entirely personal. Autobiographical fiction takes its shape from whether the writers maintain control over their fictional protagonists. Godwin's autobiography-derived fiction, the Christina stories, heeds to its characters Christina and Rudy with the intention of studying the meaning of the life and its being on this earth. This purpose is achieved through her personal experience, the loss of Starer and the difficult times that followed which she had to withstand.

The novelist has employed the Spanish philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset's concept of transmigration into others' souls here as she had done in *Violet Clay*. Christina connects herself to Rudy's psyche and had made it possible for her to involve in conversations with him. The experience is so real that there is no question raised when she waits for every chance to be with him 'even though it was only the present-in-his-absence Rudy.' (EF 73). Speaking to his empty chair, Christina reflects "I sometimes hear things. It's a wiser version of my own voice, and it was saying like a mantra: 'Absent in his presence, present in his absence.' And then I had this further idea. That somewhere in the gulf between those opposites, 'absence and presence' or 'presence in absence,' might lie the secret of eternal life." (EF 20-21)

To reach the higher form of spirituality, Godwin has characters “engage in rituals, which ranges from cleaning a kitchen to travelling outside one’s body.” (Aug 3,2017). In *Violet Clay*, Violet is given the latter to explore heart and mind as well. Violet enters a state of reverie. The religion that Godwin advocates is one that inclines towards a personal form of salvation which is different from the traditional, organized religion.

The writer adopts snowflake method of writing which is following topics for her writing and filling relevant materials under that rather than going ‘point by point.’ in her words ‘A snowflake is a kind of curtailed or organized tangent. It’s got a center and tangents that go out, but it’s a finite thing. For example, the book *Evenings at Five* has ten chapters devoted to separate incidents like, chapter one for Christina and Rudy’s times together before his death and chapter two is about their cocktail hours and the third is about her bringing to mind some quality of Rudy by looking at his things like his chair, his diary and the house they had been sharing all these years . This method gives the tale a clarity in narration and makes it easy for the reader to recollect and retain the incidents in the mind.

The snowflake method of writing was developed by Randy Ingermanson. This method starts small, with a single primary idea, inviting the writer to expand the idea from that central point. Ingermanson invites fellow writers to take or leave parts of the entire method depending on whether or not it works for them. For chapter ten in *Evenings at Five*, Godwin has taken Rudy’s chair as the lead and following snowflake method develops on it by gathering details that brings Christina to sit in the chair after Rudy’s death and then and then goes on to imagining a conversation with Rudy sitting across in the old days. Thus it serves as a medium to document the fact with the fiction and thereby developing the chapter and the story in the process. And chapter eight is about Christina’s first

meeting with Rudolf Geber[Rudy] at the writers' workshop in June 1972. This clear distinction of the subject or the idea for each episode makes it easy for the writers, and it also helps the readers to follow the account of the events.

A Southern Family has been divided into two parts. The first division of the book deals with the conflicts in the lives of the members of the Southern family and the second one is about the characters' reconciliation. Each part in turn is divided into various chapters.

The snowflake method also involves a stage, where the author concentrates on the characters and writes the story from the point of view of the various characters involved in it. Precisely, this is the part where each character begins to tell his or her own story. This is a most efficient way that facilitates the development of the story and the character.

These Christina stories were inaugurated in 1999 when Godwin wrote "Possible sins" which had eleven-year-old Christina's dialogue with her priest in the confessional that develops into a lifelong friendship, ending with their discussion on the possible ways they could get in touch after one of them dies. Familiarity with this storyline of the writer will clarify the narrative style of the work *Evenings at Five* which has the spiritual communion between Christina and Rudy who is dead.

Godwin compares *Evenings at Five* to a sonata which has 'a theme that's stated, then a companion theme' as could be seen in many scenes in the book. In a broader sense, the actual incident that is recalled in the tale is the definite part and the fictitious part is the explanation as well as the extension of the major theme. While Christina is sitting in the cocktail hour with Rudy being no more, she could hear the pitch of Rudy's voice asking "Would you like a little more?" and Christina goes on answering Rudy's chair. In an interview the author herself has mentioned the scene where Christina sits

down in Rudy's chair to drink a glass of red wine and is reminded of the priest visiting her to console her and she sitting in Rudy's chair, had imagined herself at the same time on the sofa looking at Rudy and thus there is something, a new experience for example, that comes out of the materials and in this situation "She imagines her personality and then she is able to be both herself and Rudy at once and then to be the life that was made by the two of them."(EF 279), and the book has many scenes of this nature that validates the application of the term sonata to it. Godwin's fruitful career includes musical works created in collaboration with her late longtime companion, composer Robert Starer and this explains the sense of music that pervades her writings. About writing her book she remarks "I just wanted to sit there in my house every night around five o'clock, listen to all the sounds, and evoke the cocktail hour. After five pages, I had "tricked" myself into a new way of writing. It was a tempo and I couldn't go wrong."(EF 278).

While writing memoirs she tells that she uses "fictional ploys and shapings, slipping in a fiction here and there." (EF 283) . When she writes about other people, she writes about her "internal cast of characters."

The *Odd Woman* is also divided into many chapters following snowflake method, each with a one line idea that is then elaborated to paragraphs and thereafter to a whole chapter. For chapter one, Jane's insomniac night is taken and her waking time is filled with her recollection of events in her life; for chapter two there is the phone call from Jane's mother carrying the news of her grandmother Edith's death and her attempts to hold on to things of past that will help her sustain the bad news ; and in chapter three, the planned dinner with her friend Sonia Marks and their discussion about Edith. The rest of the chapters also follow this order. Acknowledging her adaptation of this method in her

writing Godwin described it in an interview thus “Instead of going point-by-point with suspense, I let myself follow topics that entice me. I’ve done that for several of my books. It’s got a center and tangents that go out, but it’s finite thing. If it works, it makes the whole design tighter. If it doesn’t, it has to go. (OW 429).

Before starting with writing a novel in this method she has only the topics that interests her for her writing but could sense “how many chapters there are going to be” (OW 429), and what she wants in each one and then sets to write the chapters. This lends her books a surprising quality where each section is complete in itself and that it has subtle links, one to the other which requires a careful reader to recognize. The readers are introduced to the character and mannerisms of ‘Dear Frances’, Kitty’s cousin, in chapter six and when she appears in the following chapter briefly, the reference provided already helps a great deal.

In *A Mother and Two Daughters*, along with the chapter headings Godwin has given the title for each chapter. These topics are like the key words that guide the readers in understanding the subject of the chapter and could refer to the chapters by name. The chapters have symbolic topics like The Outward image where both the sisters accuse each other as “only caring what other people think.’ The Old Guard, The Sisters, and Family Business’. The book is further divided into three parts, denoting the three segments of the protagonist Cate’s life in the past, in the present and in the future.

Though Godwin’s writings revolve around women and their lives, she does not like to be labeled as a feminist writer and if she is asked if she considers herself to be a feminist writer, her answer is “No. Absolutely not.” unlike some works that are categorized under feminist writings, Godwin’s writing does not have the stereotyped setting of a

woman as the sufferer of all evils bestowed on her by the society. Instead they are women who are well educated, fairly aware of the problems they have to endure, at the same time with a realization that some of those problems are created by themselves and so they need to search for solutions not anywhere away from their environs but from within. Her protagonists do not flee men or break laws as is the characteristic of a typical feminist novel. Jane in her relationship with her married lover Gabriel Weeks did not earn anything except some occasional sex and some nice dreams at times. This left a huge vacuum in her life and it was almost excruciating that made her finally to decide on quitting her relationship with Gabriel. This decision was not a momentary thing and all the questions in her mind were to be answered before this final step which formed the content of the novel. Speaking about her writing style she stated that "I'm not an Episcopalian writer, I'm not a Democratic writer. I'm not a southern writer.. I'm a novelist interested in the inner life." (Welch 79). The heroine's exploration of her ideals and the compromises that she makes to retain relationships which is all aided by her intellect made *The Odd Woman*, ' a sort of reference book for some women.' (Welch 79).

Godwin was strongly influenced by the writings of Jane Austen and George Eliot and in some of her works she used them as inferences. Moreover the environment in which she grew up comprised of women, the private schools that she attended which were run by nuns, and her family's economics all led to her identification with the women of the British classic novels of the nineteenth century. In presenting the actuality of the scene and the predicament of the women in her novels who under the restraints of the family, society or self, fight to come out of all the elements that holds them back. There are lots of literary allusions in the fictions of Gail Godwin and the major characters in

them are either teachers of English Literature or writers or readers that makes it fit in place. In the opening scene of *The Odd Woman*, Jane, wide awake at 2 A.M, compared and contrasted her insomnia with the written testimonies of the poets and artists and thought of Donne who saw ‘his “continual waking” in his life as a rehearsal for the life to come, where one would always want to be awake’(OW 3). The first assignment that the readers come across in the novel is understanding the interpretations given to the terms ‘visionary’ and the ‘visionary experience’ with reference to the poems by Blake. While recollecting her time with her lover and reflecting over faithfulness between a man and a woman, Jane thought of George Eliot and George Henry Lewes who were faithful to each other till death. Jane believed in a lasting and creative love, and the elopement of her great-aunt with a villain from a travelling melodrama intrigued her and to her it was an act of heroic passion. Godwin also tells in the beginning of the novel “Oh, Jane Clifford can never be in an Austen novel but she might be in an Eliot novel”(OW 77). In an interview she said that she wanted “Jane Clifford to be a complete character” and since in the story Jane taught English and did her dissertation on George Eliot, Godwin reasoned it out that “if someone sat in the library and worked on a dissertation, feeling the guilt in the novels of George Eliot she would begin to think in those terms “(OW 77), and in this manner Godwin could allude to Jane comparing herself to the heroines of Eliot . Chapter one closes with Jane reading George Gissing’s *The Odd Women* which she was to teach for the spring course. In her discussion about the book with Sonia Marks, Jane analysed it as one where its writer “lets his characters think. They come to horrible ends, most of them, but they keep track of themselves so beautifully along the way. And he writes women well.”(OW 55). Godwin had based her novel *The Odd Woman* on Gissing’s *The Odd*

Women and had made her heroine Jane a well-educated woman who thinks on her own. This has made Gail Godwin 'an important model' to the academic literary women. At the same time she had not left her women characters to escape into the world of imagination by seeing them in other fictional characters and instead she makes them decide for themselves and construct their life out of "real" materials. To Godwin, education, as can be understood from the words of Jane, is "Learning from the words and experience of others, other human beings who wanted answers...." (OW 18).

Godwin has employed several known strains in literature like realism, fantasy, allegory, folktale, and myth. She uses them in her novels keeping her personal experience as the basis for travel through highly imaginative realms. Jane always searches for the meaning of life in books that she reads and her inner life is rich in fantasy. Her grandmother, great aunt, mother, friends and colleagues communicate with her primarily as voices in her own mind. They advise her along life's way. This novel that has much of the features of a 19th century novel incidentally, has Jane's grandmother Edith and her great aunt Cleva, dead more than 60 years. To her usage of the classic literature as reference there seems to be a justification that is revealed through Jane's reflection over 19th century literature. The literature of Jane's times which is the 20th century in the novel does not have any 'pure' characters and "They were no longer so beautifully whole as they were a century ago, no longer undefiled, true, pure "characters."

A partial reading list for *The Odd Woman* is *The Cloud of unknowing*; *The Odd Woman* by George Gissing; "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell" by William Blake; *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte; *The House of Mirth* by Edith Wharton; *Barren Ground* by Ellen Glasgow; and *Madame Bovary* by Gustave Flaubert. In the beginning

of chapter fourteen, Jane reviews the fates of five odd women of the nineteenth century from Gissing's book to teach her class. The allusions from literature abounds Godwin's book.

Violet Clay, which was published in the year 1978 had an creative artist as its heroine, one who pursued painting all through her life .Violet Clay followed her personal vision to be a creative artist and achieved this by guarding her against the perilous histories of the past. In this book again it was her uncle's partially completed manuscript of a novel titled *No More At Ease* that served as an inspiration for her to understand her uncle in a different light. Dostoevsky's *Diary of a Writer* was also mentioned which was read by Sheila, who loved her uncle, to 'put some fire into' her. Godwin's usage of the image of the artists in her books is symbolic. Chicago Tribune, reviewing the book has noted that it is "...a modern portrait of an artist as a young woman...remarkable." After the book's release Godwin received a letter from a woman who told her that the book had changed her life. The woman who wanted to be a writer was keeping her dreams all curtailed giving in to the domestic pressures but then after reading the novel had decided to take 'a year of her life to try write' (Welch 80) the book, which she had been dreaming of. Reacting to this incident Godwin felt that it was "like being a therapist without any right to be."(Welch 80). Her writings which almost always have intelligent, free- thinking women as the lead have great impact on the women and those women have been 'moral models' to many.

Kathleen Welch felt that 'Jane was trying to live through various literary characters...' (80). It is the literary characters that she connects to and even the others around her associate her to well-known personalities from literature. Sonia Marks in her attempt at suggesting a man whom Jane 'would find satisfying', puts in "I considered Knightley seriously, but I think you need a little more pizazz. Heathcliff has pizazz, but I

don't think you'd fall for someone that unstable. Then there's Rochester..."(OW 65). Jane and Sonia were in the department of English and so quite naturally took to such conversations and Jane in her process of understanding herself studied various literary characters and took qualities that she required from them and discarded what she did not need. This way the author has justified the usage of all such allusions by revamping the characteristics of her creations through them in her stories.

In *A Southern Family*, readers are introduced to a fictional author W.J.Cash and his brilliant book called *The Mind of The South* and he is described as the "one of the few Southerners able to live at home and see it, historically and objectively for what it was, and still love it"(344). Though he hangs himself after the publication of his book, still it is symbolic of Julia who had come home to love the place for what it was and is fairly successful. Godwin's characters are readers and this habit of theirs adds more meaning to her text by complementing it with sub-texts.

Clare is a novelist and her friend Julia is a historian who makes the metanarration belong to the main narration and the theme of the novel. It is the way with the author to understand her writing better by reflecting over the psychological and cultural realms of the novels and this she achieves by allowing her characters to make an analysis of them. Readers are thus allowed a deeper understanding of the characters' motives and actions and helps in the process of meaning-making in the narration. Jane, a teacher in English, uses this metanarration to reflect over her actions and that of her people around as a means of gauging it against life's realities.

Jane, quick at reading the mind of others, narrated her half-sister Emily's love story knowing well that it will have an interested audience in the "emancipated women"

like Sonia Marks. Her tone has that feigned disinterest meaning the story is nothing out of ordinary, while in actuality it was one to which she had developed interest for. Thus goes her narration, “well, to begin with, she decided she wanted this boy who is now her husband when she was twelve years old...Emily decided she wanted to marry John one day, and went to work.”(OW 58, 59). Jane, mindful of her responsibility towards her life which she was however making difficult for herself, admired the effortless assurance of her half-sister in her decisions. Her recalling several times, the story of Emily’s marriage, was her excuse for her disability in weighing the seriousness of Gabriel’s love affair with her. In much of her “family myths’, she resorted to this form of exceptional narration that was loaded with imagination to convince herself that the individual can have control over the events in life .When she met the man whom her family has misrepresented as the ‘villain’, told him “I’ve lately become interested in drama, the way drama relates to the way we live our lives, the parts we act... What I am interested in is: do we create the roles, or do they create us?”(OW 352).

The use of three generations of women in her work is one of the most effective structuring devices of Godwin. *The Odd Woman* revolves around the lives of three women Edith, the grandmother, Kitty, the mother, and Jane, the daughter. She lets her characters derive strength from people around, particularly from the women and Jane learnt lessons for life from her grandmother Edith and even from her mother Kitty, who had her flaws . She believed in writings that take the generational differences and similarities into consideration and thinks that” there will be more novels where the past of the person and the people in the family are brought up to the same level of dialogue, even if they’re in the past, even if it’s a memory.”(Welch 81) . The setting up of a family or the awareness

of the need of a family forms the center of her novels, though she never advocates a family life where the members do not value the family system.

In *Violet Clay*, Godwin has placed her protagonist Violet in a frail family structure and has given her an orphaned childhood and an odd grandmother, but has made Violet to construct a family for herself. The author has tried compensating the absence of the mother figure in the life of her principal character by introducing Violet's uncle Ambrose, who is used by her to fill in the role of a parent and her uncle "is a foil, an example and a shadow" (Welch 81) to her. She is from an old Southern family that had deteriorated; Godwin had to present all the members of her family in a poor light so that the darker side of the family things will present itself in horrible ways through her as she had meant it to be a gothic novel. But, it turned out to her usual type of novel where the family and the community matter with her making Violet's uncle "good and bad." And her uncle is "a mirror of Violet in some ways, with the possibility of going the other way." (Welch 82). Violet chose the good side of her uncle and progressed in life. Godwin in her interview to Welch, points out to the difference in the writing style according to the times thus "When I grew up, writing a fiction was not to make big, broad canvases but to treat one person and stay within the Jamesean point of view. You limited your point of view, but I think that's changing again." (Welch 82).

The author has strengthened her faith in the family structure by providing various parallels in the relationships and nobody was left an island and there was something for everybody to embrace and continue with their lives, living it to their maximum capabilities. Clare and Julia returned home, each one for a different reason, yet in serving as a link in the family chain they were one. Theo and Rafe, especially after the former's death,

shared an undeniable brotherhood, one in flesh and the other in spirit. Lily and Lizzie were self-contained, decisive and similar in taking to religious ways with respect to their sentiments. The ‘hillbilly’ Snow and the “red neck’ Ralph were similar when their history was traced. This list expands to include Nell and Wickie Lee, who though were dissimilar in the social status yet were rich in their individual decisions and exasperated in trying to belong to the formal social system. She concentrated on the life within the four walls of the house of the South in all of its workings. Typically many of her books have death or removal of a family member as the cross road for her protagonists and how they compensate the void created by them makes the rest of the narrative. In their loss, signifying the Southern women, they embrace a religion that is universal, one that has humanity as its core faith. In *The Odd Woman*, Jane losing her confidante grandmother Edith, absolved all her attempts at romanticizing love and decided to organize her loneliness, of being “odd”, ‘into something of abiding shape and beauty.’(OW,423). She came to terms with her step-father Ray, understood her opinionated feminist friend Gerda and respected her mother Kitty’s new found interest in religion. The author ends the story with Jane realizing that life cannot be like fairy tale novels as they skip all loose ends and every day specifics. In *A Southern Family*, Clare Quick, a famous writer in New York City, returned to her childhood home at Mountain City to be with her family. But the dreadful death of her half-brother Theo opened up new dimensions to understanding people *A Mother and Two Daughters*, *Violet Clay*, *Evenings At Five*, *Flora* and *Glass People* are different from her usual stories in that the heroine Francesca Bolt who was flawlessly beautiful, notwithstanding her over-caring husband Cameron, left him to escape the stifling ambience at home. When she found her mother taken to a second marriage compromising her life-style, she returned to her adoring husband.

Usage of dreams, visions and nightmares is another effective tool of the author and she uses it to enable the progress in the story. She does not deceive the readers by inserting dream scenes that stand away from the main narration instead, she does it cautiously understanding her responsibility in writing a fiction, and the appropriate usage of dreams in it offers an insight into the characters' psyches. Generally, dream is a way to find an expression to the unspeakable thoughts in the subconscious of the people and in a novel that of the subconscious of its characters. According to Rob Newfeld's in *Gail Godwin's contributions to literature*, Godwin's novels 'engage in an introspective process, manifesting the supernatural in ways that differ from the ghost in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*; the magical realism of Gabriel Garcia Marquez; and Nathaniel Hawthorne's allegories.'(11).

In *A Mother and Two Daughters*, Nell, after their car turned over and she was about to lose her consciousness had the vision of her doing CPR on her husband Leonard and he raising himself up telling her "You always were so competent, Nell"(MTD 23). Regaining consciousness sometimes later she realized it was all a "delusion." There was another dream of Nell's where she could see her in aloofness from the rest of the crowd who formed her social circle at Mountain City. Her non-conformity with some of the conventions of the south that were needless had expressed itself through the dream. The habitual affectations of Theodora the "maiden queen' were always a botheration to Nell and it was so noxious that in the dream she identified Theodora to a new dead body. Following it there is another dream of Nell finding her husband in his chair tells him about the "bad dream" and gets comforted by him as was his habit. Leonard had been sheltering her from the presumptuous crowd and his death left her in a handicapped position and this state of hers which she was aware of in the subconscious and her longing to have him with her had taken the form of the dream. Dreams are an integral

part of Godwin's life and her writings are used by her to bring the subconscious lives of her characters into conscious memory. Godwin's dreams are the products of her brilliance. When the story demands, she does not compromise in the usage of dreams. Godwin had mentioned about how the fiction editor at *Esquire* asked her to remove a dream sequence from her story in an interview with Paul Mandelbaum, in the work *A Sorrowful Woman*, published in the magazine in 1971. "Now, thirty years later," Godwin revealed, "my website receives a steady traffic in e-mails from baffled students-and teachers-who want to know why this woman killed herself. If the dreams had been left in, you would know why."

Dreams are thus a web of associations and Nell always had a pragmatist's approach to dreams and to her "Dreams take the events of the day before and mix all the events up in bowl indiscriminately and the result is that you often get a pretty inedible pie." (MTD 156). But in the crucial period of her life, her dreams seemed significant and powerful as they pictured the reality of the situation she had been placed by the fateful death of her husband. The author analyses the dream and interprets it to the readers through Nell thus... 'The division in herself in the dream, she understood that, too. She made fun of them, though she was one of them.' (MTD 156). There was also another man in the dream, Grady Moultrie, the young resident surgeon at the hospital where Nell was a nurse. He had 'cheated her out of her maidenhood' in the hospital and it had pained her conscience even after her marriage to Leonard. The humiliation she faced haunted her for a very long time and later, in her misery and feeling of insecurity those thoughts hidden in the darker side of the mind had found its escape to the conscious through the dream. Dreams, as Nell marvels are the result of 'the treachery of the subconscious.' They keep a 'tireless vigil...waiting for the vulnerable moment in which to pounce.' (MTD 156).

The writer Godwin's intention is to analyze the mysteries of human behavior and existence. "Dream and reality are...reciprocal sources of consciousness" (10-12). She uses a distinctive style for her fiction writing where the narrators live and speak from an amalgamated world of past and present. Their world is a world of reality, dreams that has in it, the shared quality of irony, humor, sensibility, regret, despair, hope and practicality. This compound mixture has a major contribution in the Godwin's lifelong subject for her novels where she analyses the human experiences that are haunting. Godwin said :

Story crystalizes into figures of necessity... Then, there are certain sets that you return to again and again and again in your imaginative theater, like recurrent dreams. I have Asheville sets. One is St. Mary's (Episcopal Church). One is St. Genevieve's. They don't represent themselves. They represent points of growth. They stand for attitudes and challenges. You can learn so much from dreams. (*The Finishing School* 327)

Dreams populate Godwin's fiction and there is an array of daydreams that fill in the gaps in the narration by exposing the unspoken thoughts. On her usage of dreams in her writings, Godwin tells "My dreams are definitely a commentary on what my unconscious is trying to tell me-what's being neglected and what's being falsified."(EF 286). In *Evenings At Five*, after Rudy's death, Christina created a world for herself where she could have communion with her dead husband as she was able to 'still hear the essential you [Rudy], though I miss having you in sight.' (EF,113). Such a world is not possible in the human terms and the author imagines one and dreams and day dreams are the tools for creating it. The conversations that Christina had with his empty chair was such through which she created an opportunity for living with his memories by giving it a shape. The conversation between her and the spirit of the person had a dream quality in it. She had wanted to be

with him for the summer but Rudy's life had come to an end before that and he in his last days had told her that they 'still have some more time together'(EF 20). In the dialogue with him that she envisioned, she asked him if he really thought they had more time to be with each other for which she heard him answering "I hoped so"(EF 109). Such scenes intensify the survivor's faith in togetherness after death and also shows ways for reconciliation with happenings that human beings cannot influence. Dreams come as an expression of the individual's state of mind. As an inference to the dreams serving as a means for connection with the departed soul, Godwin has the anecdote involving Father Weir in the novel where Christina has 'playful-but-serious dialogue' with him about the possibilities of the dead sending messages back to the living and about its authenticity when Father Weir replied that it must be through a ' third party's dream'. Thus it could be interpreted that dreams are the carriers of messages from people who have left this world and by using them she bridges this world and the world of the dead which is not known to any. So Godwin referring to dreams tells "I don't think that dreams are in the same world. It's just a separate thing,I think."(Welch 84).

A similar incident appears in *A Southern Family* where Rafe recollects to the doctor the time his elder brother Theo telling him, when they were young boys, that "he had a feeling he was going to die in Vietnam, but he promised me he'd always find a way to contact me[Rafe] after death." (SF 289). Rafe as a small boy, had dreamt of his brother getting killed in the Vietnam war and his body being sent home wrapped in a flag. On the day of Theo's tragic death Rafe, who was not informed about it at the time, was thinking that if his brother had died in the war then he would have been spared the misery of being humiliated by his wife . It was then that the news of his brother's death reached him.

Dreams seem to be carrying with it messages to the living. This usage of dreams to bring forth the hidden hopes, desires and misgivings of the person involved is common in Godwin's works.

There is a whole lot of dream sequence used by the author in *The Southern Family*. Rafe tells the doctor that if his mother Lily had been there with the doctor telling her about Theo, then she would have given her the picture of him as 'a dreamer' and 'a mystic' and 'A boy who was never completely of this world...and went wandering through an alien world trying to redress wrongs.'(SF 276). Rafe's display of emotions before the doctor shows that he is noticeably, the most affected by the death of his brother in the family. He had dreams that carried his anxiety to have his dead brother alive in this world. He dreamt of a person who was willing to "turn into Theo" for him for the rest of his life and then he "wouldn't have to be so lonely."(SF 266). He told that because he shot the person whom he saw in the dream, he had lost "Theo not only in life but in some other dimension as well."(SF 266). Since he had "this awful feeling it was Theo" whom he had shot and he blamed himself because he was not "brave enough to make the dream come out differently."(SF 266). There was also another one where the two brothers were puppies and Theo, the sick puppy, was placed next to him when he heard a human voice telling him that "he's going to live after all." Thus all the dreams were centered around Theo's disastrous ending of his life and the survivor's, and here Rafe's wish to see the loved one coming back to life. It was the result of Rafe's strong belief that his dead brother was watching him from wherever he was. According to Judith Herman(1992), the traumatic memories of a person that are hard to be deciphered verbally are stored in the nonverbal part of the brain as images and bodily sensations. By merging fact and fiction in the

novel, Godwin has tried to romanticize her half-brother's violence to self and other and the despair of his family in reality and that of Theo and his family's in the novel, through the utilization of dreams that symbolize the existence of Theo's 'personality' and its immortality. The author goes on emphasizing on this possibility by ending the chapter 'No saints' with Rafe, who is drunk, calling out to Theo for help in his sleep and Theo promising him that he will 'get him home.' Godwin uses dream as a therapy to heal the bereaved soul of the survivors, and from the life writing part she does the role of both the novelist and the therapist, weaving the tale considering the dissociated ideas of the events that led to the tragedy and to those after it, giving the narrative a plausible shape. Her style is true to what Herman explains as "Out of the fragmented components of frozen imagery and sensation, patient and therapist slowly reassemble an organized, detailed, verbal account, oriented in time and historical context"(177) and she has not let the emotions that usually accompany such incidents affect the description. This dream and reality ends in her characters bringing the subconscious lives into conscious memory.

The seafront bedroom at 'No Saints' and its amazing properties are another illustration of the writer's fondness for dreams in her writings. In the breezy room which the landlord had called as his 'favorite', Felix had the vision of the ocean lifting him up from either side of the bed and he experienced 'a loving attention' reaching out to 'an immense variety of thoughts and creatures that were him.' Clare too, while in the room dreamt of her falling in love with a 'better' herself. Godwin has strong individuals in her novels who try shaping their own lives as they desire and to them, the nights that give a form to their unconscious through dreams is of significance as Jane observed her mother Kitty preferring to "stay home at nights where you belonged, building your own interior

castle.”(OW 11). Even Clare’s editor who told them he seldom dreamt, dreamt of being at an archaeological dig where they uncovered the tomb of a goddess. A week after that, he met a dynamic young woman and ended his forty-year marriage for her commenting that refusing her was like “refusing a gift from the gods.”(SF 409) Clare felt there were some interesting connections between his love and his breezy room dream. The room was thus believed to tell people something rewarding if they were ready to listen to it and the visions seen seemed to possess the ‘power of suggestion.’ Godwin is preoccupied with the relationship between private, individual selves and larger, more mythic selves.

In *Violet Clay*, there is a ‘rape dream’ that Violet has in the chapter “Still Life with Taxi,” which could be interpreted as women’s secret wanting to be raped. Instead, the author reasons it in her way that Violet yearned to be a successful artist and when she could not achieve that ‘she wanted to be destroyed, or humiliated, and the humiliation took the form of a rape dream.’(Welch 83). The novel also has the recurrent dream of Violet going too late for a math exam that awoke her crying and sweating. But one day, disgusted by a dream, she walked to her teacher and gave her the reason for being late and asking her if she will let her “make it up.” Her teacher consented to her request and that was the end of the dream. Thus Godwin’s women put their pursuits to the test, and try to gain consciousness and control over the happenings in the illusory world of the dreams .This dream has in it the theme of ‘deadline’ running parallel to it with the math exam standing for Violet’s dream to be an acclaimed artist before it was too late. Godwin states “There are deadlines in every aspect of life: career deadlines, physical deadlines, giving birth, final illnesses, and final exams...” (VC 347).

Dream analysis is a process of determining the meaning of dreams through symbols, myths, free association, and memories. There are a variety of philosophies and approaches for analyzing dreams including Adlerian (dreams are projections of a person's current concerns), Gestalt (every thing in a dream, be it a person or a thing represents an aspect of the dreamer), and psychoanalytic (dreams lead to the happenings in a person's unconscious). So, rape in the dream, is a symbol of destruction to Violet and the fear in her unconscious mind that she may fail to be a popular artist has taken the form of a dream. All these are in accordance with Carl Jung's suggestion that dreams integrate the conscious and unconscious lives of people which could be termed as the process of individuation. In the novel, however there is no such incident that happens in the dream or in reality and she grows to be an artist.

Godwin's protagonists do not settle for things ordinary and the kind of life sought after by them has a mystic quality about it. this could be the reason that her characters are academics or artists mostly and by nature strive for greater knowledge, and this makes them survive all odds. Godwin wrote in her journal *The Making of a Writer*, "I am sinking into everydayness. Then I see the vision, only for a minute. The synthetic 'second life' we have created does not really matter. I see this pattern more clearly, I will be able to write about it." She creates the possibility of a life even after death that transcends everything physical in this world. The dreams, reveries and visions that appear in her novels are all in effect the products of the author's consciousness of the extraordinariness of the human race. This belief of the author is reverberated in the words of Clare in *A Southern Family* who wrote a letter to her dead brother as an act of recompense valuing his wish which went as a description of her mother and it read "The Lily of my childhood

believed in Art the way the Lily you grew up knowing counted on God... I was taught by her to believe that special patterns of words, or the resolution of chords, or inspired slashes of colored pigment on a flat surface could make all the difference between feeling you were an ordinary person, lonely, disappointed, and trapped, and knowing you possessed a passkey to a kingdom with powers and privileges unlike any other.”(SF 392).

Godwin has faith in people and she infuses this belief in her characters. Her women value preservation of self, the continuation of the family, and derivation of strength from the community. Her novels end with her women concentrating on the present and future possibilities rather than its constraints. Her protagonists go through ‘someone else’s disappointments and failures’ so that they understand ‘someone’s full self’. She wanted her characters and through them the people to know the fears that haunted people and the horror of ‘failing one’s potential’.

Godwin does not give a feministic bent to her writings. “if I started looking outside myself and saying, “Gee, what can I do for the women’s movement?” I’d write perfectly awful books. They would be diatribes.” She does not want to be labeled a “feminist writer” that will limit her; she advocates women realizing their life and living it to their satisfaction, concentrating on their inner self. Her interest in writing originates from the need “to expand awareness of the possibilities of experience.” She takes an aesthetic pleasure in writing books that achieves her goal of saving her soul and the advantage is that she is able to reach out to some other people also through her letters. She does not attempt writing for the movements of women which may make her books “datribes”. Godwin focuses on the perception of self as well as of the physical world. Her books revolve around classic feminist issues such as liberation, love, marriage, and

understanding self. This may mark her as a women's writer, but such a confinement is groundless as her works embrace people beyond the categories of gender. According to critics her book *The Odd Woman* could be compared to the sensitive writings of Doris Lessing and Margaret Drabble who have refused to be categorized under feminist writers.

The desires and disappointments of womanhood and the realistic aspects of its effect in life is the author's area of analysis, which has in it the quality of psychological realism. She invents for her women, their own thought pattern. Jane in *The Odd Woman* sinks in the ceaseless thoughts that characterize her insomniac state. And then when she returns home "there's that whole other setting in which she's embedded more than she knows." (OW 432). For Violet Clay, her thoughts take the pattern of a creative artist. She envisions life in colorful strokes of a painter's brush.

Godwin steers the best out of her women characters to make them labor towards realizing the greater things beyond the visceral world. Consciousness of human limitation and of the infinite predominates her writing, her interests lying beyond any paradoxical motivations under the banner of women's liberation. Her women laugh at their own follies and that of others, their primary concern being living a "real life." *The Odd Woman* is about identifying a solution to the uncertainties in the life of women. It ends affirmatively with Jane, the chief character in the novel trying to organize 'loneliness, and the weather and the long night into something of abiding shape and beauty.' (OW 423).

Some of Godwin's novels were criticized, for example, her *Violet Clay* for being too intelligent and *The Good Husband* for being too ambitious and for its overt symbolism. In spite of such criticisms, she is commended for her creation of the female protagonists who represent the women of the modern times with their own sorrows and uncertainties typical of the age.

A whole spectrum of women is created by the author for her books. Godwin has experimented with various literary modes and techniques and in every new thing she tried; she had won the viewers' praise. As Mary Ann Wimsatt noted in her article 'Gail Godwin, the South, and the Canons', "During slightly more than twenty years of an active career, Gail Godwin has established herself as one of the most gifted, prolific, and popular late twentieth-century Southern novelists."(86).

Godwin's works are mostly based on real events from her life and to shape those events into a fiction she uses various symbols to give it an understandable form and imposes it with deep meaning and her works turn out to be highly symbolic by nature. To Jane who was holding on to the possibility of idealistic love in her life, her grand-mother Edith who fainted at the feet of Hans Barnstorff calling life as a disease and later married him was a symbol of a woman's 'satisfactory ending with a Good Man'(OW 23).Jane had women in her family who had dramatic tales of love and marriage of which Edith's alone was a success. All her words to her were valuable as Jane saw that Edith possessed a clearer self beside her confused and unclear self. Her grandmother asking her not to marry because she was one among the people who "aren't made for the married state"(OW 106), recurred in her mind, whenever she imagined her future with her married lover. Her grandmother was also the symbol of "the perfect Southern lady"(OW 56) whom Jane could never be. She signified the passage of time and was the link between Jane's mother Kitty and Jane and also between the past and the present. Even the mirror in Edith's room, like Edith was symbolic of time and showed "how you used to look, how you look now, and how you're going to look."(OW 57).

Death is another vital symbol that is common in Godwin's work as it does not just indicate the end of the person's life but the end of all qualities the person signified. Both Kitty and Jane are bereft at the death of Edith because for them as Gerda pointed out, the death of a symbol was too disrupting for it carried with it the promise of blissful love for Jane and the breaking of the chain that connected them with the past. Jane, her mother, her grandmother and her friend Gerda were women who were not satiated by anything ordinary and they were desirous of new experience or thing that would be the highest of its order. The author also had used the 'train' that Kitty never caught while she attempted to elope with her second lover as an effective symbol and when any of the women in the novel said "I'm driving myself to the train"(OW 34), it meant that the person was trying to seize some high ideal that could finally satisfy her and in the novel no woman boarded the train which meant such an utopian ideal that was perfect does not exist at least in the world of Godwin's women.

A Mother and Two Daughters also had death as a symbol and the novel began with the death of Leonard Strickland, the head of the family of Stricklands. He was shielding his wife and daughters from the rash judgment and incredulities of the society at Mountain City and his demise sets forth the action with the three women, his wife and his two daughters, dissimilar in temperament to form associations with the society and among themselves and in making them refurbish their sense of self. Unlike in *The Odd Woman*, in this novel, death leads to the strengthening of the inner lives of the women who begin constructing their personality by blending with the surroundings.

Clare's half-brother in *A Southern Family* was a symbol representing a part of her psyche that rebelled against the writer in her who did not allow any unpleasant incidents

in her writing for the sake of nicety in her novel. The junkyard that her step-father Ralph had left on the way to their home at the Mountain City was another symbol in the novel suggesting the ‘horrors of poverty’(SF 346) amidst which he grew and he had savored a sadistic pleasure in reminding others around him about his humble origins. It was also an affirmation of his proclamation to the society that he will never be one among the other bourgeois members. His daughter-in-law Snow who like him was from the lower class of the society was a symbol to Ralph in turn reminding him of his nostalgic past and this similarity in their origins made him closer to her than any other member of the family with Theo exempted. To understand the people of any culture one needs to understand their language first and Godwin has made use of her familiarity with the language of the natives in the usage of the stock phrases of the region like, ‘Mr. Stuck-up with the piggy eyes.’(SF 221) and ‘shit-eating grin’(SF 222).

To Francesca who was weary of the monotonous perfection of her husband, the woods at her mother’s place that she chose to wander was a place of passions that she could choose from. The wild woods and the imaginary lover with whom she spent time there were symbolic of the unbridled freedom she was expecting in her marriage to Cameron where she was valued only like some work of art for her splendid beauty. At the woods, ‘her body did not confine her.’(GP 66) and this gave her a sense of accomplishment which she had been yearning for while at her husband’s place as she had to be measured in all her actions there just as Cameron wished her to be to shield her beauty from ‘chips or flaws’(GP 12). She enjoyed the liberty with the lover at the woods which was denied her by Cameron who was scrupulous in maintaining his public image ‘even in the privacy of his home.’(GP 15). There are certain similes which the author has

used here like the one where Cameron speaks about his belief in shapes. To him, “Relationships are containers. Marriages are containers. Friendships and families are containers.”(GP 99) which provided a solid form for the storage of one’s identity and these containers also provided refuge mutually to the other containers during hardships.

Godwin has provided a multi-faceted outlook to all her narration through her style in writing that has rendered her books the quality of a work of art.